

City of Fremont, Environmental Services Division
Three and Easy
Residential Food Scrap Program

ANTS-BE-GONE

Got Ants?

Now that you can put food scraps and food-soiled paper in your green organics cart (yardwaste), here are some less-toxic ways you can control any pesky ants that may be around your food scraps kitchen pail, organics cart, or your garbage cart.

Why use less-toxic products to control ants? Not only are they safer for your home and family, but for the environment as well. Common household pesticides show up in Bay Area creeks, sometimes at levels that can harm sensitive aquatic life. Even applied according to label directions, conventional pesticides may wash into the gutter and down a storm drain where the water flows untreated directly into local creeks and San Francisco Bay.

Storage & Barriers

1. Wrap your food scraps in newspaper or paper bags. (Please no plastic bags in the green cart; plastic contaminates the compost).
2. Leave especially attractive food scraps (fruits/sweets) in your refrigerator or freezer until the night before collection.
3. Ants won't cross water, so if you can, set the kitchen pail in a shallow dish of water.
4. Ants send out scouts (one or two ants). Kill the scouts every time you see them, and eventually, the nest will stop sending them (count on this to take about a month. Ants are slow learners).
5. Ants have trouble climbing up anything slick like vegetable shortening or petroleum jelly. Wipe a ring of either substance around your kitchen pail to stop them.
6. Place a barrier on the outside of your organics cart using a waterproof banding material. This material provides a non-absorbent surface for application of a sticky pest barrier product. As the insects climb up over the sticky bands, they become trapped without escape. You will have to monitor the effectiveness of the band since periodic re-application will be necessary when the sticky pest barrier becomes too dirty.

Ant Baits

Ant baits contain a pesticide mixed with an attractive food substance. Ants take small quantities of bait back to their nest to share with their nest mates. In this way the entire nest can sometimes be eliminated. Ant baits are best used inside your home.

1. Use baits with boric acid, hydramethylnon, fipronil, or arsenic as an active ingredient.
2. Place the bait in the path of the ants.
3. Keep several different baits on hand because ants change their food preferences frequently. If one bait is not working, try another. Wait at least a day to see if they take the bait.
4. Baits may take several weeks to kill the ants. At first you may see more ants coming to the bait, but after a few days to a week you should see a significant reduction.
5. When the ants are gone, remove the bait and return it to its original container. Place the container in a plastic bag and seal it to use again.

Insecticidal Dust

(For inside around kitchen pail storage area) Use diatomaceous earth (DE) in wall voids and cracks before they are sealed. Use a hand duster to apply DE and wear a dust mask and goggles. DE has little toxicity to humans or pets, but kills insects by absorbing their outer waxy coating, causing dehydration and death.

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Other Suggestions

Here are some ant control tips we have compiled through suggestions from residents in other cities that have a food scrap program and from other sources. We DO NOT guarantee the effectiveness of these ideas, but it could certainly be worthwhile to give them a try.

- Dust the ant-infested area around your containers with baking soda or baby powder to stop ants.
- Mix one tablespoon of biodegradable peppermint oil soap with 2 cups of water in a spray bottle, this mixture kills ants on contact and helps drive away future ants.
- To control ants outside, sprinkle anthills with a mixture of equal parts powdered sugar and powdered borax.
- At the point of entry, pour a line of paprika, red chili powder, dried peppermint leaves or cream of tartar.
- Ants dislike salt. Spread a good layer of salt in their path and they will no longer enter.
- Place orange peels or lemon peel in kitchen pail and cart, put peels in ant holes and add water.
- Sprinkle plain old instant grits near ants. The ants eat them, and then go for water, which makes the grits expand inside them & they die.

If you have any questions or suggestions on ant control and food scraps, call the City of Fremont Environmental Services Division at (510) 494-4740. For more information and a list of products, visit Union Sanitary District's web page at:

www.unionsanitary.com/environmentalprograms

Also, check out this fact sheet about controlling ants without harming the environment:

www.unionsanitary.dst.ca.us/environmentalprograms/commercial/pdf/ipmants.pdf